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SUBJECT: TURKEY LOOKS SERIOUSLY AT KYOTO PROTOCOL

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Turkey is a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but has never signed the Kyoto Protocol. Turkish officials are looking seriously at the Kyoto Protocol, both because adopting it is a requirement of the daunting environment chapter of the EU "acquis communautaires" and because of increasing public awareness of the risks of climate change. A drought in central Anatolia, including Ankara, and perceptions of unseasonable and increasing temperatures are feeding public concerns that Turkey would be especially hurt by climate change. Officials believe that Turkey should be able to negotiate special obligations given that Turkey is a "developing developed" country. Last spring, Turkey created a special parliamentary commission to investigate climate change and it will send a significant delegation to the next framework convention meeting in Bonn. End Summary.

Background - Turkey is Special

12. (U) When the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) was adopted in 1992, Turkey, as an OECD member, was included among the so-called Annex I and Annex II countries. Under the convention, Annex I countries have to take steps to reduce emissions and Annex II countries have to take steps to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries. However, in comparison to other countries in these annexes, Turkey was at a relatively early stage of industrialization and had a lower level of economic development as well as a lower means of assisting developing countries. Turkey was not given a quantified emissions reduction or limitation objective in the Kyoto Protocol. Following a number of negotiations, in 2001 Turkey was finally removed from the list of Annex II countries but remained on the list of Annex I countries with an accompanying footnote specifying that Turkey should enjoy favorable conditions considering differentiated responsibilities. This led to an official acceptance of the UNFCCC by the Turkish Parliament in October 2003, followed by its enactment in May 2004. Turkey has not, however, signed the Kyoto Protocol.

Need to Engage in the Kyoto Protocol Process

13. (SBU) According to MFA Environment Department Head Nursel

Berberoglu, Turkey is now seriously looking at the Kyoto Protocol, noting that Turkey will send an ample multi-agency delegation (Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Environment, Energy, and Industry) of over twenty officials to the UNFCCC meeting in Bonn May 14-18. As evidence of how Turkey is looking seriously at the issue, she cited creation of a National Climate Change Coordination Group, a Parliamentary commission on climate change last March, and a number of studies by the State Planning Organization (SPO). Berberoglu emphasized that -- as part of the EU accession process -- Turkey would eventually have to accede to the Kyoto Protocol as one of the key "acquis communautaire" in the difficult environment chapter. Therefore, Turkey needs to quickly gain information and develop a strategy for dealing with climate change and the Kyoto obligations, for example positioning itself for potentially joining the post 2012 commitment period, perhaps in synchrony with EU accession. She noted that post-2012 negotiations under Kyoto are to end in 2009, so Turkey should quickly engage in the process. Moreover, Berberoglu expected that Turkey should be able to negotiate special commitments given Turkey's exception in the UNFCCC and in recognition that it is a "developing developed" nation.

14. (SBU) Berberoglu complained that press coverage of a recently completed SPO report was sensational, only high-lighting worst-case scenarios of significant obligations that would allegedly reduce Turkey's future GDP by 15% to 35%. In fact, she noted that the SPO report was quite balanced and neutral, aiming to provide information and alternatives to help policy makers make informed decisions on the Kyoto Protocol. She stressed that Turkey was now committed to dealing with climate change, emphasizing wide interest in relevant ministries. MFA plays the coordinating role for Turkey's participation in the relevant international processes and the Ministry of Environment is the focal point within Turkey.

Need to Inform the Public

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15. (SBU) The Regional Environment Center Turkey (REC) has been designated by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry as the National Focal Point for the UNFCCC Article 6 on Education, Training, and Public Awareness. REC Director Sibel Eralp and Climate Change Project Manager Yunus Arikan emphasized their role in informing the public and the government, rather than directly advocating. They were pleased that key Ministries of Energy and Industry, as well as SPO, had overcome initial reluctance and resistance on climate change policy. Eralp stated that the recently formed Parliamentary Commission, headed by a Parliamentarian who is an environmental engineer, had taken a thorough and exhaustive approach, listening to all stakeholders. They lamented press coverage that continued to emphasize overly negative worst-case scenarios and recognized that REC needed to redouble its efforts to inform the public. Eralp and Arikan stated that the Istanbul Municipality was advancing independent initiatives, like localities in the United States.

16. (SBU) Over the past few years, Energy Ministry officials have emphasized their commitment to reducing energy import dependency and more efficient use of energy resources, including adoption of new renewable energy and energy efficiency laws. Industry observers view these developments as positive, but note that investment incentives are often not clear in their length of term or quantification. The Energy, Agriculture, and Environment Ministers recently jointly expressed their commitment to devise a national strategy for combating climate change in Turkey (ref).

17. (U) Turkey's Ministry of Environment recently published Turkey's First National Communication on Climate Change, in cooperation with the UNDP. The 265-page report aims to satisfy a UNFCCC requirement to raise public awareness by providing extensive background and explanation, an inventory of greenhouse gases, and possible mitigation measures that could be employed. The report highlights "Turkey's special circumstances" gained with respect to the UNFCCC process. The Turkish Ministry of Environment has the lead in formulating a national strategy for action on climate change,

including harmonization of policies with the general environmental policies of the EU.

18. (SBU) Comment: The economic cost argument against Kyoto is compelling in Turkey. However, the Turkish public is increasingly concerned about a current drought threatening Ankara and central Anatolia's water supply and the long-term threat of climate change on drought-prone Turkey (ref). While Turkish officials and public are increasingly skeptical about Turkey's prospects for EU accession, there is a broad commitment within the government to advance work on completion of specific chapters, such as environment, recognized as one of the most difficult and expensive. Our reading of the SPO study is that it was quite balanced and recent press coverage of it was unfairly sensational. The parliamentary commission on climate change is viewed as very effective; however current political turmoil and the election calendar will put serious efforts on climate change on hold.

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